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U N I V E R S I T Y O F O X F O R D,

O C T O B E R 25, 1783,

By G. C R O F T, D. D.

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VICAR OF ARNECLIFFE, MASTER OF BREWOOD SCHOOL, AND CHAPLAIN TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF ELGIN.

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Advertisement.

THE Writer of the following Discourse is happy in an opportunity of making a grateful acknowledgement to the worthy Dean of Gloucester for the instruction received from his excellent Treatise on Government, and of apologizing for some Hints which have been taken from that Treatise.

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S E R M O N, &c.

Prov. 24. 21.

*“ My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and med-
dle not with them that are given to change.”*

WE are assembled to express our gratitude to the Almighty for the blessings of a regular Government, to implore the Continuance of his Loving kindness to the King as supreme, and to all others delegated by the King for the administration of justice, and the encouragement of religion and virtue. In which Solemnity we are paying no adoration at the Shrine of greatness and power, nor are we offering the offensive incense of adulation, as if our Rulers were more than Men. Paganism deified, and Popery
B canonized

sanonized some of the most arbitrary and tyrannical Monsters the World ever knew. But true Christianity has taught us better things: it has however taught us no malignity against the higher powers, it has inculcated no levelling principles: it exhorts us by the holy Apostle, "*to make prayers, supplications and*" "*intercessions for all men; for Kings and for all that are in*" "*authority,*" because their conduct more materially affects the welfare of Society, "*that we may lead a quiet*" "*and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,*" that we may, without interruption, conscientiously perform the religious and the social duties of Man. Every Petition we offer up to the throne of Grace presupposes that we have resolved to cherish and improve those qualities and dispositions, which are essential to the success of such Petition. And herein consists the great advantage of Prayer, that whatever outward good it may procure, whatever outward evil it may avert, it renders us inwardly more humble, more resigned, more charitable and more peaceable: it brings

brings us from the wanton, unjust or at least unprofitable accusation of others, from groundless or ineffectual complaints against imaginary or inevitable Misfortunes to a serious and careful examination of ourselves. And in order that on this occasion our Meditations may co-operate with our Prayers, that the Understanding may strengthen the impressions made upon the heart, let us listen to the advice of the Text, "*My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.*" Which Words suggest to us First, the Connexion there is between the fear of the Lord and the fear of the King. Secondly, The Folly and Danger of an inordinate desire of innovation.

And first the Words suggest to us a necessary Connexion between the Fear of God and the Fear of the King. Systematical Writers have had recourse to some original compact between King and People, on which they imagine all Authority to be founded ;
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they have also farther insisted upon it that Man is naturally an enemy to all Authority, and that he originally submitted to it with reluctance, that the true Nature of Government has hitherto been but little understood, and that though the World has subsisted almost six thousand years, it remained for a few enlightened Men of the present or preceding age, to dispell that gloominess, and even thick darkness which has overspread the whole World. But what is the real Truth? Kingdoms, like Individuals, have had their infancy, their years of weakness and ignorance; they have grown gradually wiser by experience and richer by industry, the inconveniences and evils they have suffered have taught them to reform abuses, and to establish more wholesome laws in future: succeeding Generations have received with Gratitude what their Ancestors discovered by their Wisdom, or purchased sometimes by the Loss, and often at the hazard of Life, and something is daily added to strengthen the Bulwark of national Security

ty. But does any one pretend to find perfection, or must he remain disquieted and perplexed till it be found? Neither reason nor Scripture warrant, but condemn such a Conduct in the strongest terms. Reason teaches us that we can mix in no Society without resigning a part of our natural Liberty, (a part of such Liberty as we should have, could we subsist single, independent and unsupported) and a part of our private Judgment. And it must be a worse Government than the World was ever yet acquainted with, which does not abundantly compensate by protection and assistance, the greatest concessions which can be made. The utility of many Laws can only be learnt by experience, and ignorance and error will enter into every human Institution. But what are these evils when compared with such as arise from Anarchy and Confusion, of which almost every nation under heaven has had fatal experience, and to risque the return of them is surely little less than extreme Madness? And

yet we now and then hear of the glory and lustre and happiness of these Kingdoms under him, who trampled upon everything, to become possessed of supreme and arbitrary power. Our Ancestors wisely appointed an annual Commemoration of that disgraceful Part of our history, in which the Murder of a pious King was a Prelude to the destruction of Religious and civil Liberty. It was doubtless their intention that Posterity should learn from this sad Catastrophe, that even legal opposition should be conducted with Moderation, and that when the turbulent passions of Men are once let loose, the most rational and discerning part of the Community will be the greatest Sufferers. But the Sagacity of some Men in these days has discovered, that this Murder was attended with good consequences, and that the observance of a day of humiliation were better omitted. Let us leave such Men to their Meanness and Republicanism, and pursue the subject under consideration. It is obvious that every reasonable Being should

should act by some Law, and if he, who sent us into the World, had so thought good, he might have given to all Mankind a System of Laws whereby to regulate their Political Conduct. And yet even then these Laws could not have been executed, but by Men duly appointed and properly qualified ; still there must have been a difference of Rank between the Governors, and those whom they governed.

Those occupations which are requisite to supply the wants and the Comforts of Life must always engage the Bulk of Mankind, and better were it to resign both the interpretation and the execution of the Laws to a few Individuals, than to call the Mechanick or the Soldier from his regular Employment to one for which he is totally unqualified. Here then is laid one Foundation of Civil Obedience. But when not only the Execution, but even the Enaction of Laws is left to the discretion of Men, it unavoidably follows that some should devote their time to the arduous

arduous task of deliberating what laws will be conducive to the public good. And as it requires greater ability to interpret than to obey the Law, so the Enaction of Laws requires still greater than either. Can it be supposed that the Almighty would make it necessary for the Wisdom of Man to form a Government, and yet not make obedience a duty? And it is a duty in the Governor as well as in the subject; a Law speaks a Language, commanding the Attention of each. Even the great Lawgiver of Nature hath prescribed Rules to himself: Infinite Wisdom hath given Law to infinite goodness and power. How much more necessary then is it, that weak, frail, dependent Creatures should be restrained and protected by wholesome and impartial Laws? And when the foundation of those Laws is laid in Virtue, the observance of them is conducive not only to public peace but to private happiness. The fear of Man hereby leads us to the fear of his displeasure who is able "*to destroy both body and Soul.*" Indeed the
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several parts of our duty are so interwoven, that we cannot easily separate them, we cannot find out an instance of Civil Obedience, which does not include in it some moral duty. Even admitting an action to be in itself of an indifferent nature, the order and regularity, which it is calculated to establish, gives it a rank, which, abstractedly considered, it could not have. Hence arises the obligation of human Laws in Matters of indifference, and whatever contributes to our improvement in morality, must, by the confession of the most Zealous Advocates for Liberty, become a part of our duty to him, who is not the Author of Confusion, and who, by making us sensible of our wants and necessities, hath clearly enjoined the performance of every Condition requisite for their supply.

Having seen then how far Reason connects the fear of the Lord and the fear of the King, let us learn what Light scripture hath thrown upon the subject.

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Perhaps we shall be told that the great deference with which regal Authority is treated in the Old Testament, has misled many, and that as the Almighty himself vouchsafed to appoint the Kings of Israel, the title of the Lord's anointed cannot with propriety be applied to others. But when we consider that the Trust of one King is the same with the Trust of another, that they are all constituted for the happiness of the States which they govern, though somewhat differing in the degree of power which those States have granted them, a similar designation must create a similar claim. And let us advert to that case, in which, respect was paid to the Monarch, when his Kingdom was taken from him, and by that very person, whose Life he fought, and who was appointed to succeed him. Twice he spared his Life, and put to death the Messenger who expected to have gained great honour and advantage by a false pretence of having slain Saul, with this severe Remonstrance, "*How, wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine*

*" thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed P--- Thy blood
 " be upon thy head, because thy Mouth hath testified against
 " thee, saying I have slain the Lord's Anointed."* The King
 hereby intended to teach him that there was something
 awful and venerable in fallen Majesty, and that authori-
 ty itself would soon sink into Contempt, unless per-
 sonal respect be paid to him, who is, or has been, invest-
 ed with it. Nor is this the Maxim of a particular
 Government, or justified by peculiar Circumstances;
 it is justified by the consent of all nations and the
 practice of all ages. The Diadem, the Sceptre, the
 Purple and the Attendants are so many Emblems and
 Memorials of the Reverence due to Power. If,
 however, the advice and the example of Men who
 lived under a Theocracy, will have no influence,
 let us pass on to those Times in which *" the Sceptre
 " was departed from Judah ;"* to those times, in which
 Rome, the Mistress of the World, was enslaved by
 her own Governors. Even then our Saviour enters
 into no disquisition whether one Nation have a
 right

right to tyrannize over another: whether those privileges, which have been taken away, may not be recovered by Violence, whether national Resentment on such occasions be not highly commendable; No: he simply asks whose image and superscription the tribute Money bore, And upon being answered, Cæsar's, His Precept is, "*Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's,*" thus connecting Civil and Religious Obedience together. Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, written in the time of Nêro, enforces Submission to the higher powers, and declares that he who resisteth the power, resisteth (not the Voice of the People but) the Ordinance of God. Saint Peter writing to no one particular community or society, but to the Strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, administers the same wholesome doctrine of obedience, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King as supreme or unto Governors, as unto them that*
are

are sent by him for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the praise of them that do well. And in the same Epistle he says, *All of you be subject one to another and be cloathed with humility.* As if he had said: though there must be difference of rank in Civil Societies, and submission must of course be most of all the duty of Inferiors, yet there is a certain Sense in which the humblest stations are entitled to deference and respect, and these instances are not necessary to be pointed out to that Man, in whose heart humility dwells; every Moment of his life presents him with opportunities of exemplifying by his Kindness, and and even by his outward deportment, the respect due to every one, whose industry and ingenuity contribute something to the public good. A Benefactor in the smallest degree is entitled to our Gratitude, and upon the same principle that we are thankful to him, "*who hath given us all things richly to enjoy,*" we must be thankful in proportion to those who are instruments of his Goodness.

Princes have had the appellation of Benefactors by way of eminence, and the Hebrew word (נָרִיב) which signifies Prince, includes in it the idea of Liberality and Beneficence—Though our Saviour may appear to speak with contempt of earthly authority, when he draws a comparison between worldly Pre-eminence, and that pre-eminence after which the Apostles were commanded to aspire, yet no such contempt is in fact implied. The Purport of his argument in the 22d Chapter of Saint Luke seems to be this. “ You are contending amongst yourselves
 “ which shall be the greatest, and this you do in conformity to the Maxims of the World : You see
 “ men invested with dignity and authority throughout the Kingdoms of the earth, and every degree
 “ of respect is paid to their exalted Station: the People willingly obey them and bow down before
 “ them, defend them by their arms, and support them by their Tribute. You are dazzled with the
 “ Splendour that surrounds them, you are studious
 of

" of the Honours which are paid to them. But the
 " greatness you are to aim at is of a different kind,
 " greatness to be acquired by humility and conde-
 " scension, by a performance of the kindest offices,
 " of which I have given you an example in my own
 " Conduct. I have explained to you by action, more
 " strongly than words could explain, what an infinite
 " degree of such humility and condescension you
 " ought to practice : I have placed myself in the
 " Character of a menial Servant and have washed
 " your feet ; What instruction can be more intelli-
 " ble? Yet do not think that your faithful Services
 " shall go unrewarded, that all your Labours shall
 " end in nothing but Mortification and Suffering.
 " No: as you have been faithful to me, so will I be
 " faithful to you, as you have hitherto continued
 " with me notwithstanding the scoffs and revilings
 " and persecutions of the Jews, I will confer upon
 " you Pre-eminence suited to the nature of my Reli-
 " gion, I will confer upon you Dominion of the same
 nature

" nature with that which my Father hath conferred
 " upon me, Dominion not of this World, for then
 " would I have armed you with temporal power to
 " acquire and preserve it, but Dominion of a spiritu-
 " al nature, which ye cannot yet throughly under-
 " stand but which must be described under Simili-
 " tudes drawn from earthly Jurisdiction: you may
 " however conclude that it will confer upon You all
 " the honour and all the pleasure you shall be capa-
 " ble of enjoying."

In all this reasoning not one word can be found
 which in the least depreciates human authority, and
 as well might we refuse our natural Sustenance, be-
 cause our Bodies shall hereafter be changed and ex-
 empted from want and infirmity, as refuse obedience
 to the earthly Magistrate, because the time is shortly
 coming, when all our homage shall be paid to the
 King of heaven only. The necessity in both cases
 arises from our State of frailty, imperfection and
 probation.

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The Fear of God and of the King are also intimately connected as they have a common Tendency to check the wayward and the selfish Passions. The Civil Magistrate is not the only person, to whom the Almighty hath delegated authority for our Support and Welfare. As soon as we are born we seem formed only for obedience, being altogether unable to govern or even help ourselves, and we are trained up in subjection. And when from the condition of human things, the parental charge devolves upon others for our improvement in knowledge and virtue, a suitable degree of deference is required on our Part. But soon, too soon alas! we discover the impetuosity and perverseness of our nature. We are impatient under the Yoke which it is necessary to bear, we dispute the propriety of that discipline which it is necessary to undergo: and let the Prudence of our Instructors be ever so great, let our habits of obedience be ever so confirmed, yet the Moment the restraint is taken away or relaxed, we

show a tendency to licentiousness. We can see innumerable imperfections in every regulation and in every Law, till seriousness and reflection soften our Resentment and improve our Candour, till the benign Spirit of Christianity incline us to long suffering, goodness, gentleness, to make allowances for the infirmities of those who frame and of those who execute the Laws, to wave the consideration of particular hardships where the general good is consulted or at least intended, and to learn the comforts of *studying to be quiet and to do our own business*. To these comforts an inordinate desire of innovation is so hostile, that we are naturally led in the second place to consider the folly and danger of it.

Every Innovator sets out with complaints of great and intolerable abuses, and alarms Men with apprehensions that their property is wantonly taken from them, and lavishly expended, and that their very Liberty is in danger. He will refer to distant periods of
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of our history, in which the principles of the Constitution were sacred and inviolate, when Magna Charta was obtained, when Parliaments were annual, when Representatives vouchsafed to receive Instructions from their Constituents; when disinterestedness and public Spirit actuated every Member of the Legislature, when Prerogative was confined within narrower Limits, and corrupt influence could not prevail. And when Arguments drawn from our own History are exhausted, he will refer us to the happy Days of Greece and Rome, when the People enjoyed uninterrupted Freedom and Prosperity, and Merit only was rewarded ; when the noblest Services were to be a while forgotten, lest the Hero, who had performed them, should arrogate too much to himself. And as if the history of past times were insufficient, he can add a prophecy of exquisite happiness and uninterrupted liberty to those Regions which will flourish without a King, and without Nobility. When the mind is duly soured by these insinuations, when
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it has conceived a thorough hatred of all that are put in authority over us, then ignorant or turbulent Men are called forth from their regular employment to dictate to the Senate, to condemn by censure, or extol by their Praises, persons who deserve neither the one nor the other, and to over-awe the freedom of public deliberation, then the infallible Remedy is proposed, a Remedy for all the Evils we may hereafter suffer, the people are flattered as the fountain of all authority, and are besought by every thing sacred and dear to them to oppose usurpation, and to guard against future Encroachments. Thus Jealousy and Malignity are excited, and if they return to their habitations outwardly peaceable, their inward peace is totally destroyed. They no longer obey the Laws with Cheerfulness, and Wealth and Power, which at all times excite Envy, are now beheld with abhorrence.

'Tis true that an unfortunate and expensive War has brought upon the People immense Burdens, but
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the most censorious must confess that those Burdens fall upon a part of the community best able to bear them. And if the Weight of them shall be instrumental in restraining Luxury, and encouraging industry, even our Misfortune may turn to our advantage. As to our Liberty, every Shadow of an Encroachment upon it is guarded against with a jealous eye, and in many instances the rigour of the Laws is softened by the humanity with which they are executed. In former Periods of our History when were those boasted Halcyon Days enjoyed? Did they exist in the infancy of Parliaments, and in the infancy of Commerce, when the Pride of the Barons and others possessed of extensive Domains, caused one part of the Legislature to look down upon the other with Contempt, when the Country was governed by a Number of inferior but arbitrary Kings, whose will was their Law, and who led out their Vassals to execute every vindictive Measure which Malice or Caprice could dictate? Was not

Magna Charta itself obtained by the Jealousy which one party entertained of the other? Was Prerogative either properly understood, or confined within the Limits of Law in those early Ages? Or was it not rather the Misfortune or Infatuation of some of our later Kings to extend it no farther than it had been extended before, and yet to feel the peculiar Hardships of so doing, because they lived in times when a Spirit of Enquiry prevailed, and Mankind grew more enlightened? In the numerous Revolutions which happened, in the numerous Contests carried on with various Success between the two Houses, did not the new Monarchs convene Parliaments sufficiently disposed to coincide with their Inclinations? Had it been possible for Representatives to receive Instructions from their Constituents, how narrow and circumscribed was the office of the Legislature; How burdensome was it deemed to send Delegates, how burdensome was it to be chosen. We cannot therefore wonder that those who thought their employment a
hardship

hardship should wish to shorten it's duration, and that when Subsidies were to be granted, they should consult their Constituents how much they were able to contribute. It does by no means follow that they thought themselves obliged to consult them in every instance, or that their opinion would be binding upon others, much less does it follow that he who can receive Instruction from the whole world, from the wisdom and experience of past ages as well as of the present, should have Recourse to one district, be it ever so considerable and extensive. It is much more consistent with his honour and his dignity to look upon himself as the Guardian of the general interest of his Fellow subjects, and compelled, if such a case should happen, to sacrifice the advantage of them by whom he is delegated to the good of the community at large. And if this principle prevail in full force, the conduct of a Senator will be the same whether deputed by ten or ten thousand. But it is said that Corruption will, by the proposed plan
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of reformation be totally prevented. As long as Men are frail, property and power and ambition and avarice and resentment will influence their conduct under any circumstances; and these Advocates for the people little consider that should they succeed, they will bring the Government nearer to that which in some Moments and on some occasions they complain of its having already become an Aristocracy.

Recourse is had to the histories of Greece and Rome but where do we find that uninterrupted Prosperity and Tranquility so much boasted of? The Deliverers of their Country from Slavery are commemorated with proper gratitude, and the recovery of liberty is celebrated with heartfelt satisfaction. But are there no complaints of the turbulence of the people, their desire of change, their clamours against the nobility, their ingratitude to their faithful Servants, their caprice in bestowing honours, their acceptance of Bribes, their obstinacy, their ignorance, their

their secessions? What may be the happiness of the new Republick as neither we nor our Adversaries can foretell, so no argument can be drawn from thence. We have as yet discovered no instances of unbounded Liberality of Mind, we have as yet found no Relaxation of slavery. As yet some of the boasted and every where undisputed rights of mankind are withheld from a part of their People, and who may in some future day practise the lesson which their Taskmasters have taught them. Power amongst ourselves is not therefore more burdensome, because some possess it by inheritance. He, whose Mode of Education, and whose Mode of thinking are adapted to the Station which he must necessarily fill, will sometimes fill it with more dignity and more propriety than one who is unexpectedly called forth by clamour and an affectation of popularity, with a mind perhaps narrow, unimproved, and illiberal, though possessed of some degree of sagacity, artifice and cunning. That the exceptions are many, too many is not

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denied;

denied ; but they are as many on one side of the question as on the other ; and it is some consolation under all the complaints of disregarded Merit, that it is more frequently rewarded in this Country than in any other, and that some of the first Stations are filled by Men, whose Abilities commanded respect and Encouragement, without the aid of hereditary honour.

It were undoubtedly to be wished that every Man in every State should possess influence proportioned to his Wisdom and Integrity : but the estimation of that Wisdom and that integrity is vague and uncertain. Inheritance, therefore, property and peculiar situations have conferred privileges, which no discretion of Man could have distributed impartially. And indeed if Providence in this state of probation causes the Misfortunes and the Misconduct of the Father to affect the Son, if honour and infamy not only descend, but spread themselves collaterally through Families
and

and Tribes, we cannot surely wonder that many of us do not possess what our Ancestors were content either never to have had or to relinquish. In days of savage rudeness, property as well as privilege must have been frequently seized and retained by violence, but a wise Man thinks it better to enjoy in Security what he has, than to grasp at Uncertainties by tumult and rapine. The People, in short, have resigned the power of making Laws into the hands of the Legislature, and it can neither be just nor prudent to resume that power, unless compelled by a necessity which as yet has not happened, and we trust never will: and we may conclude with the judicious Hooker, that "with the custom of easiness to alter and change is so evil, no doubt but to bear a tolerable fore is better than to venture on a dangerous Remedy." But as the love of Novelty is natural to the human Mind, let us confine ourselves to those experiments, which, if not always successful, will be attended with no inconvenience; experiments,

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which may add to the comfort or the innocent amusement of life, which may unfold some of the secrets of nature, or strengthen useful truths already communicated. And if we want leisure or ability to render men wiser, let us endeavour to make them better, let us endeavour to repress licentiousness and restore the influence of true Religion, let us exemplify in our own Conduct the government of the passions instead of inflaming them, let us circumscribe our wants, so shall neither prodigality make us dependent, nor disappointment render us discontented, so shall our Learning not be prostituted to the Purposes of Flattery or Malignity, our minds will preserve their proper elevation, and in executing the venerable offices of public Instructors, we shall inculcate the general duty of obedience without Subtleties either unintelligible, or unprofitable, and without any partiality except on the side of Religion and Virtue, not as Men pleasers, but as the Servants of God.-----To whom. &c.

F I N I S.

